

ARTICLE ATTACHED
ON PAGE 9

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Soviet aide reportedly defects

By Ronald Koven
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PARIS — The defection to the West of a Soviet official in charge of relations with Iran's communist party, the Tudeh, has undermined the party's position in Iran, according to well-informed Iranian and Western sources.

Yuri Anisimov, officially a low-ranking diplomat at the Soviet embassy in Tehran, disappeared mysteriously in June and has yet to surface publicly.

Reliable sources say he has been spirited out of Iran to Britain. Since arriving in Britain, or before leaving Iran, he appears to have provided extensive information on the Tudeh that seems to have helped anti-Soviet factions in the Iranian Islamic government root out pro-Soviet infiltrators.

There have been several raids and arrests of high-level Tudeh members, indicating that the Iranian authorities are well-informed about the party's clandestine apparatus. There is also intense speculation that the defector was in a position to give away the identities of at least some of the Soviet infiltrators belonging to the numerous ethnic minority groups that straddle the Soviet-Iranian border. There have been reports of large numbers of such agents coming into the country soon after the Islamic revolution in early 1979.

Although the Soviet Union supported the shah of Iran in an effort to bolster stability in the sensitive region, the Tudeh and the Soviets switched to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini after the shah was overthrown. The Tudeh's tactics were to keep a low profile and to stick as close as possible to Khomeini and his mullahs, regardless of the frequent political humiliations suffered by the Soviets at the hands of the Islamic revolutionaries.

While the Tudeh was quietly working itself into positions of influence in the Iranian administration, it apparently was also maintaining its under-

ground organization, just in case.

The Iranian government apparently kept the Soviets in the dark for a long time concerning the whereabouts of their diplomat, whose job gave him detailed information about the Tudeh.

Initially uncertain about what had happened to Anisimov, the Soviets are understood to have asked the Islamic government to help find him.

At first, according to an account put together from several sources with access to pieces of the puzzle, the Iranian government replied that it was unable to find him.

More recently, however, the Tehran government informed the Soviets that Anisimov had left Iran for Britain, reliable sources say.

A Farsi-speaking specialist in Iranian affairs, Anisimov arrived in Tehran more than five years ago, in late 1976, and was maintained at the lowly rank of third secretary at the embassy. This has raised informed speculation that he was, in fact, a ranking KGB officer.

His functions apparently gave him unusual freedom of movement, unlike most Soviet diplomats in Tehran, who are largely confined to the big Soviet embassy compound or travel in pairs. One source said the Soviet defector had been in touch with the British for some time. British officials here said they knew nothing about the case.

The defector's abandoned car was found in early June in western Tehran, near intelligence headquarters of the Iranian army. At first, independent observers in Tehran were unsure which of the 40 Soviet diplomats officially listed at the embassy had disappeared. It was also unclear whether the Russian had been kidnaped by an opposition group, had been killed or had defected.

It became clear, however, from strengthened Soviet security precautions and other nervous behavior that the Soviets in Tehran were worried.

Soon after Anisimov's disappear-

ance, the Islamic authorities raided an important Tudeh communications center in the neighborhood where his car was found, sources said. The raid, which was never announced, also netted an important leader of the Tudeh underground, Hossein Zadeh, the sources said. The communications facility was camouflaged as an interrogation center of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard, they said.

This was followed by accusations by the Tudeh and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards that each was infiltrating the other's organization. The Tudeh accusations came in party leaflets whose public distribution is still tolerated, even though the official Tudeh newspaper, Mardom, has been banned.

Several known leaders of Tudeh, including the former editor of Mardom, were also arrested. Nouredin Kinouri, leader of the Tudeh for 33 years, resigned as the party's first secretary, although he evidently continues to be its effective leader.

Sources link the loss of influence of pro-Tudeh clerics to the defection of Anisimov. The most notable was the fall from the vice presidency of Iran's parliament in mid-July of Hojatoleslam Mussavi Khoiniha, the "spiritual guide" of the Islamic students who took the US embassy staff in Tehran hostage. He has close family and political ties to the Tudeh.

But the Tudeh's apparent loss of influence takes place in the confusing flow of currents and crosscurrents in Iran. As an apparent consolation for his loss of office, Khoiniha was named by Ayatollah Khomeini to be leader and to give "a new dimension" to the Haj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca of the Moslem faithful. Khoiniha was given official backing to try to turn the pilgrimage into a major campaign against moderate Arab governments, especially Saudi Arabia.